

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 (ADP) W

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O P 121445 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1867

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ROME

USUN NEW YORK 026

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

S E C R E T SANAA 397

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, YE, ET, IS

SUBJECT: " TIME" STORY ON ALLEGED ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ZUQAR ISLAND

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

BEGIN SUMMARY: ACCORDING YARG FONOFF, ANTICIPATED
" TIME" STORY ON ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ZUQAR ISLAND
OFF YEMENI COAST HAS NOW APPEARED AND BEEN PICKED
UP BY AREA RADIOS. YARG AGREES ON DESIRABILITY OF
WORKING OUT WITH IEG JOINT OR PARALLEL STATEMENT OF
DENIAL, PERHAPS BASED ON JOINT VISIT TO ZUQAR THAT WOULD
BE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO CONFLICTING SOVEREIGNTY CLAIMS.
YARG APPRECIATES US FOREWARNING WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO
ITS EFFORTS KEEP PROBLEM MANAGEABLE AND WITHOUT
DAMAGE TO YEMENI- ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. INTERIOR MIN BRIGADIER MUHAMMAD ' ALI AL-' AKWA,
WHO HAS TAKEN OVER AS ACTING FONMIN IN NU' MAN' S
ABSENCE, ASKED ME TO CALL MARCH 12. FONOFF UNDER
SECRET

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SECRETARY AL- KHODR SAT IN.

2. AL-' AKWA SAID TWO AREA RADIOS, BAGHDAD AND KUWAIT, HAD CARRIED REPORTS OF ARTICLE APPEARING IN MOST RECENT ISSUE OF " TIME" MAGAZINE, STATING THAT ISRAEL HAD OCCUPIED OFFSHORE YIXENI ISLSCD OF ZUQAR AND HAD ESTABLISHED COMMUNICATIONS AND RADAR FACILITY. HE AWARE FONMIN NU' MAN HAD EARLIER EESCUSSED WITH ME POSSIBILITY OF SUCH ARTICLE APPEARING AND USG STATEMENT THAT IT HAD NO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT SUBSTANCE OF STORY. ' AKWA ASKED THAT I REVIEW CONVERSATIONS WITH NU' MAN. I DID SO. HE WONDERED IF I COULD GIVE FIRM ASSURANCE THAT THERE WERE NO ISRAELIS ON ZUQAR. I SAID I COULD ONLY REFER HIM TO STATEMENT RECEIVED FROM DEPT WHICH I WAS CONFIDENT USG WOULD NOT BE PREPARED MAKE UNLESS IT HAD CHECKED MATTER OUT TO ITS SATISFACTION.

3. ' AKWA SAID HE WAS GRATEFUL THAT WE HAD FORE- WARNED YARG. YEMEN ATTACHES IMPORTANCE TO IMPROVEMENT OF ITS RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA AND WOULD NOT WISH SEE THIS AFFAIR DISRUPT THOSE RELATIONS DESPITE OPPOSING CLAIMS TO ZUQAR. AT SAME TIME, YARG MUST ACT QUICKLY TO COUNTERACT IMPRESSION WHICH WILL NOW BE SPREADING IN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES THAT YEMEN HAS MUTELY COUNTENANCED AN ISRAELI BASE ON ITS SOIL. ' AKWA ASKED IF I HAD ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO HANDLE THIS URGENT PROBLEM.

4. ON A PERSONAL BASIS I SUGGESTED YARG TRY TO WORK OUT WITH IEG AN APPROPRIATE JOINT OR PARALLEL STATEMENT THAT, WHILE NOTING CONFLICTING VIEWS AS TO SOVEREIGNTY OVER ZUQAR, WOULD SAY THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD CONSULTED REGARDING ALLEGATION OF ISRAELI PRESENCE ON ZUQAR, AND WERE IN POSITION DENY ITS VALIDITY. I NOTED THAT FONMIN HAD INFORMED ME OF YARG INTENTION CARRY OUT DISCREET SAIL- BY OF ZUQAR AND SAID THAT IF THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE AND HAD DISPROVED ALLEGATION, YARG WOULD PRESUMABLY NEED NO FURTHER PROOF TO MAKE THE KIND OF STATEMENT RECOMMENDED. IF RECONNAISSANCE HAD NOT TAKEN PLACE, YARG MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER WITH IEG A JOINT VISIT

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TO ISLAND AS BASIS FOR DENIAL.

5. ' AKWA SAID HE APPRECIATED THIS SUGGESTION, WHICH
FITTED IN VERY MUCH WITH HIS OWN TENTATIVE THINKING.
HE APPEARED UNAWARE OF THE PLANS FOR RECONNAISSANCE.
HE ASKED IF WE WOULD BE WILLING SPEAK TO IEG IN
THIS SENSE. I SAID I WAS SURE DEPARTMENT WOULD
TAKE VIEW THAT SINCE OUR TWO FRIENDS WERE ALREADY

IN ON THIS PROBLEM, IT BEST MANAGED BY DIRECT
CONTACT BETWEEN THEM. FIRST STEP SURELY TO CALL IN
ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR AND GO OVERWITH HIM
THE PROBLEM
CREATED BY PUBLICITY. ' AKWAR ACCEPTED THIS POSITION
AND SAID HE WOULD CALL IN ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR SAME
MORNING, KEEPING US INFORMED AS SITUATION MOVED
ALONG. HE ASKED IF HE COULD OBTAIN ON URGENT BASIS
FULL TEXT OF " TIME" ARTICLE.
CRAWFORD

SECRET

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** EXDIS

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANAA00397
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SANAA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730324/aaaahjwg.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Sep-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <16-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971117
Subject: " TIME" STORY ON ALLEGED ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ZUQAR ISLAND
TAGS: PBOR, ET, IS, YE
To: ADDIS ABABA
AMMAN
ASMARA
JERUSALEM
JIDDA
ROME
SECSTATE WASHDC

SS

TEL AVIV

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005